

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 734

By Beck

A RESOLUTION to honor the Tennessee Titans on reaching the AFC Championship Game.

WHEREAS, the east bank of the Cumberland River in Nashville is home to one of the most beloved and most dynamic football teams in this State's illustrious gridiron history, namely the Tennessee Titans; and

WHEREAS, to the great delight of their many fans across the Volunteer State, the 2019 Titans far exceeded expectations to not only qualify for the NFL post-season but to excel in the playoffs recalling fond memories of the Music City Miracle, the 1999 AFC Championship, and the near victory in Super Bowl XXXIV; and

WHEREAS, the Titans got off to a rocky start in their first six games of the 2019 NFL season, winning only two games against four losses; and

WHEREAS, in Week 7 versus the Los Angeles Chargers at home, the Titans began the redemption of their season, eventually finishing 7-3 in their final ten games for a 9-7 overall record and qualifying as the sixth-seeded wild-card team in the AFC; and

WHEREAS, the Chargers game featured Ryan Tannehill throwing two touchdown passes in his first start at quarterback and an incredible goal-line stand by the Titans defense in the waning moments of the game, which was capped by Wesley Woodyard forcing and Jurrell Casey recovering a Chargers fumble at the Titans' one-yard with fifteen seconds remaining to preserve the victory, 23-20; and

WHEREAS, in the Week 10 game versus the Kansas City Chiefs, the Titans were energized to be playing against one of the best teams in the league, whose star quarterback was returning from an injury; and

WHEREAS, the team's 35-32 victory featured many scintillating individual performances by Titans, including Derrick Henry, who rushed for 188 yards and two touchdowns, one of them a 68-yard romp; a fumble forced by David Long and returned 53 yards for a touchdown by Rashaan Evans; and two touchdown passes by Ryan Tannehill, the second one a 23-yard toss to Adam Humphries that gave the Titans the lead with 23 seconds remaining; and

WHEREAS, without a doubt, the biggest play of the game belonged to Joshua Kalu, who blocked a 52-yard field goal attempt by the Chiefs as time expired to seal the Tennessee victory and earn a special place in the hearts of Titans fans forever; and

WHEREAS, the victory over Kansas City sparked a four-game winning streak that catapulted the Titans into playoff contention; after two tough losses, the Titans faced a favorable "win and in" scenario in Week 17; and

WHEREAS, with a playoff berth on the line, Tennessee easily handled the Houston Texans, 35-14, to punch their post-season ticket and claim their first victory in Houston since 2012, thanks to 211 yards rushing and three touchdowns by Derrick Henry; two touchdown passes by Ryan Tannehill; and 124 yards receiving and one touchdown grab by rookie receiver A.J. Brown; and

WHEREAS, the sixth-seeded team playing against the six-time Super Bowl champion New England Patriots in the wild-card weekend of the NFL playoffs, the underdog Titans stared their nemesis down as the former pupil, Coach Mike Vrabel, outcoached his mentor to claim a 20-13 Tennessee win and advance to the divisional round; and

WHEREAS, as part of the festivities, Derrick Henry celebrated his twenty-sixth birthday by rushing for 182 yards, the most rushing yardage ever recorded in the playoffs against a team coached by the gentleman from New England; Derrick also rushed for a touchdown that was set up by a 22-yard screen pass from Tannehill to Henry; and

WHEREAS, despite this huge upset of the defending champion Patriots, football pundits gave the Titans little chance of repeating this feat against the number-one-AFC-seed Baltimore

Ravens in the divisional round, and the Titans were soon ensconced as 10-point underdogs; and

WHEREAS, the pundits were inaccurate to say the least, as the Titans trounced the Baltimore squad, 28-12, transporting the Ravens to the land of nevermore and advancing to the AFC Championship Game; and

WHEREAS, the Titans' outstanding effort was led by their ferocious defense, which forced two interceptions (Kevin Byard and Kenny Vaccaro) and a fumble (forced by Jurrell Casey and recovered by Jeffrey Simmons) by the Ravens' star quarterback; Jurrell Casey also recorded two sacks of the extremely agile signal-caller; and

WHEREAS, the Titans defense also twice stopped the Ravens on attempted fourth-and-one conversions (David Long and Harold Landry, respectively); and

WHEREAS, on offense, Derrick Henry turned in his usual brilliant performance by rushing for 195 yards, thus becoming the first player in NFL history to post three consecutive 180-yard rushing games; this multi-talented phenomenon also utilized the old-school jump pass to lob a surprise three-yard touchdown pass to Corey Davis; and

WHEREAS, Ryan Tannehill, in many ways the architect of the Titans' mid-season revival, threw two touchdown passes, the first featuring a remarkable juggling catch by Jonnu Smith in the corner of the end zone; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Titans next faced off against the Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC Championship Game with a trip to the Super Bowl on the line; and

WHEREAS, despite a valiant effort by the Boys in Blue, including two touchdown passes by Ryan Tannehill and a touchdown run by Derrick Henry from the wildcat formation, Kansas City prevailed, thus ending Tennessee's highly successful, storybook season; however, sunny skies, a multitude of victories, and another deep playoff run are forecast for next season, with a significant chance of a Super Bowl victory; and

WHEREAS, three Titans were named to the Pro Bowl team; not surprisingly, one of them was Derrick Henry, the league's leading rusher with 1,540 yards and the co-leader in touchdowns with 16; and

WHEREAS, punter Brett Kern was selected to his third consecutive Pro Bowl; the longest tenured Titan, Brett led the NFL in punts placed inside the opponent's 20-yard line with 37 and out-of-bounds punts with 18; he was fourth in the league in punting average with 47.1 yards and net punting average with 43.1 yards; and

WHEREAS, quarterback Ryan Tannehill was also named to the Pro Bowl roster after leading the Titans to a 9-4 record as the starter, including their two post-season victories; and

WHEREAS, he was honored by the Pro Football Writers Association as the NFL's Comeback Player of the Year and Most Improved Player of the Year, awards made all the more impressive considering he didn't start a game until Week 7; Ryan led the league in passer rating among starting quarterbacks; and

WHEREAS, five additional Titans were named alternates for the Pro Bowl team: defensive lineman Jurrell Casey, safety Kevin Byard, cornerback Logan Ryan, guard Rodger Saffold, and long snapper Beau Brinkley; and

WHEREAS, during this long and rugged season, the Titans were fortunate to have the leadership, patience, expertise, and innovative approach of head coach Mike Vrabel; and

WHEREAS, a consensus All-American at Ohio State, Coach Vrabel is no stranger to winning football; he played linebacker for fourteen seasons in the NFL and was an All-Pro and three-time Super Bowl champion as a member of the New England Patriots; and

WHEREAS, hired as the head coach of the Titans in 2018, he nearly took the team to the playoffs his first season at the helm; this year, he strung all the pieces together to lead the Titans to the AFC title game; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Titans exploded during the final ten games of the NFL season to qualify for the playoffs, and then despite being significant underdogs, they won two postseason games over the defending Super Bowl champions and the AFC's top seed, respectively, very nearly reaching the pinnacle of the football world; and

WHEREAS, playing with the heart and soul of champions throughout the season, the players and coaches of the Tennessee Titans are worthy of awe and approbation on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the Tennessee Titans on reaching the AFC Championship Game, pay tribute to their exemplary 2019 season and 2020 post-season run, and extend to the team and coaches our best wishes for even greater success next season.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.